
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Wednesday, September 1, 2004

CONTACT: Mary Broz

Director of Communications, Legislation & Consumer Education
(804) 367-9142 or Mary.Broz@dpor.virginia.gov

Flood Aftermath Raises Risk of Fraud

Board for Contractors Warns Public: Beware of Unlicensed Contractors

RICHMOND – The need for repairs following flooding or tropical storm damage can make consumers vulnerable to unscrupulous contractors and repairmen who may exploit the situation. As a result of the widespread damage from Monday's torrential rains, the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) cautions consumers to be wary of unlicensed plumbers, contractors and home repair scam artists.

Virginia law requires a state license – not just a local business license – for most contracting work or bids over \$1,000. Violators are subject to arrest and conviction for unlicensed contracting. By hiring licensed contractors, consumers make themselves eligible for monetary relief from the Contractors Transaction Recovery Fund in case of dishonest conduct. Consumers have very little, if any, recourse against unlicensed contractors.

DOs:

Deal only with licensed contractors.
Verify licensure and check on complaint history by visiting www.dpor.virginia.gov or calling **(804) 367-8511**.
Download consumer guides from www.dpor.virginia.gov for tips on how to hire a contractor.
Get a written contract with a firm price and start and finish dates.
Contact the local Building Official for permit requirements.
Limit your down payment to one-third of the total cost.
Pay by check.

DON'Ts:

Make rushed decisions.
Sign anything until you understand all the terms.
Pay 100% of the bill until the work is 100% complete.
Pay in cash.

BEWARE OF:

High-pressure or scare tactics
Over-friendly sales pitches
“Material left-over”
Escalating prices
Deals that sound too good to be true

Consumers who have been victimized by a contractor scam should immediately call local police and contact the **DPOR Compliance & Investigations Division at (804) 367-8504**.

###